



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 6, 2021

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**MAYOR LORI E. LIGHTFOOT JOINS ALDERMAN JASON ERVIN, GARFIELD PARK RITE TO WELLNESS COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS, AND LOCAL RESIDENTS TO CUT RIBBON AT WEST GARFIELD PARK COMMUNITY ROLLER RINK**

*Newly finished roller rink represents first step in Mayor Lightfoot's Neighborhood Activation Initiative in West Garfield Park*

**Chicago** – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot joined Alderman Jason Ervin (28th Ward), City leaders, and members of the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative to cut the ribbon on the newly finished and state-of-the-art Roller Rink located at a formerly vacant lot at 4000 West Madison Street and conceived of by members of the neighborhood. In addition to the new Roller Rink, this lot is actively being transformed into a Community Plaza that will stand alongside the Roller Rink in West Garfield Park as part of the Mayor's new Neighborhood Activation initiative. Neighborhood Activation is a focused violence prevention and community investment initiative that combines community aspirations with City investments and assets to implement programs, social services, and changes to the built environment at a hyper-local block level.

"This beautiful new roller rink is the first completed project of many investments we have down the line as a part of our Neighborhood Activation Initiative, which will bring resources to communities that are facing high levels of violence," said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "Only through making investments like these are we able to give our most vulnerable residents the resources they need to stay engaged and stay safe. I want to thank all of our community, creative and City partners for bringing this roller rink to life for our West Garfield Park residents and look forward to our continued collaboration."

The rink was designed by Chicago-based landscape and architecture firm [Site Design Group, Ltd.](#), and constructed by the Chicago Park District over the last two months, but was conceived as part of a year-long community engagement process to evaluate the West Garfield Park neighborhood assets and needs, led by architecture and urban design practice Studio Gang and non-profit the Goldin Institute in partnership with local community organizations including the West Garfield Right To Wellness Collaborative.



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As the first neighborhood selected for Neighborhood Activation, West Garfield Park is a priority for increased safety. West Garfield Park had the highest rate of fatal and non-fatal shootings relative to the population of all community areas in the city. The West Garfield community is also in the top five when it comes to neighborhoods experiencing narcotics sales and opioid addiction. The Neighborhood Activation initiative builds on Mayor Lightfoot's all-hands-on-deck approach to public safety and seeks to address the root causes of violence by bringing a whole of government response to the community through the provision of social services, job programs, opportunities for residents of all ages, and changes to the physical landscape.

"Access to affordable, engaging recreation activities is vital to the health and vitality of any community," said Chicago Park District General Superintendent & CEO Michael Kelly. "Through our partnership with the City, we have transformed an unutilized space into a new roller rink and plaza in Garfield Park, offering residents space to gather and enjoy in a constructive way."

"I believe that design can be an agent of positive change and it has been deeply gratifying to use our skills as architects to lead this community-empowered visioning process, working directly with those who know the neighborhood best to articulate a better future for their community," said Studio Gang Founding Partner Jeanne Gang. "It is wonderful to see the resulting project by Site Design Group that brings our planning work to life for the community."

Both Studio Gang and the Goldin Institute donated their services to design and conduct a robust community engagement process in West Garfield Park, resulting in proposals for community-led neighborhood changes. Building on Studio Gang's 2017 work for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice in New York, and the local peace-building knowledge from the Goldin Institute's Chicago Peace Fellows program, the team researched the history of the neighborhood, the built environment, and existing initiatives in the community to suggest ways that design interventions could support community members' aspirations, uplift the good work that is already happening, and identify opportunities for additional investment that could address the root causes of neighborhood violence.

The Community Plaza and Roller Rink were proposed by community members who wanted to create safe community spaces and youth programming opportunities for residents. This newly completed Roller Rink and multi-purpose space are open to the public daily all summer long. Following this, the City aims to install permanent lighting, furniture, a stage, and outdoor activity space when the rink reopens in 2022, allowing it to serve the community year-round.



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While the Roller Rink and Community Plaza will be the first built components, Neighborhood Activation looks broadly at West Garfield Park and has involved departments across the City, working collaboratively to meet community needs and maximize impact. The Chicago Park District, Department of Transportation, Chicago Public Library, Department of Public Health, Department of Family & Support Services, Assets & Information Services, Department of Planning & Development, Chicago Police Department, Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events, the Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership, and the Department of Housing have all made important contributions to this initiative.

In addition to this newly finished Roller Rink and upcoming Community Plaza, the West Garfield Park neighborhood anchors Legler Regional Library and Melody Elementary School. These facilities have recently made improvements and continue to provide supplemental resources to residents in connection with the Neighborhood Activation initiative.

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